

Shadows Of A Broken Mind by OPINT

Category: Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Horror, Mystery

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2018-02-18 11:17:59

Updated: 2018-03-03 15:20:14

Packaged: 2019-12-17 00:55:52

Rating: T

Chapters: 4

Words: 5,032

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: The people of Hawkins have put the past where it belongs - behind them. But the upside down is only the tip of the iceberg. Dark things lurk in the forgotten corners of reality, and through the conduit of man, one of them has taken interest in a certain psychokinetic girl. My personal Lovecraftian take on S3, just warning you now, it'll be darker than the source

1. Chapter 1: Void

Hello! First fanfic so play nice. This chapter is going to pretty graphic, so there's that, but I did rate this T so...

Please please *please* leave reviews, I highly value critique. Thanks for reading!

Belshwood, Maryland, 1972

Huh. Huh. Huh. Huh.

The cold, crisp November air bit at his exposed skin. Like needles, cold little drops of stinging rain pelted his face, but it barely registered in his mind. All he could hear, all he could focus on, was the simple, rhythmic sound of his breathing; the simple, rhythmic motion of running as fast as he possibly could.

He couldn't let himself hear the laughing.

Huh. Huh. Huh. Huh.

The cold, hard ground of the woods was littered with rocks and twigs that scratched his bare, freezing feet, but that was of little importance. He could barely see in the almost pitch-black of the moonless night, but that too didn't matter. He weaved around a large oak tree that had popped into view scarcely a yard in front of him, and then immediately tumbled over a guardrail and onto a road. The rough concrete scratched the skin of his left arm and cheek, but the boy, scrambling to his feet, ignored the stinging pain and the warm trickle of blood down his face. A flicker down the road, about 300 yards down, caught his eye. There. Lights. Sirens. Police. On heavy legs and bleeding feet, the child sprinted toward the light.

As he grew closer, the single flicker of light turned into a veritable visual cacophony. Over a dozen vehicles were sprawled across the narrow, two-lane road. The blue and red light of police sirens and ambulances cut through the darkness, illuminating the area and projecting flickering shadows at odd angles. Through tear-blurred eyes, the boy managed to make out the letters on the side of the

closest car, a large black Jeep. *FBI.*

The boy stopped running, the fatigue in his muscles and the pain of the cuts and scrapes having finally registered in his mind, and his legs buckled. A man in a paramedic's uniform came running over, accompanied by two other men in suits, and he grabbed the boy as he fell to the ground. "Hey kid, stay with me, don't close your eyes, stay with me, kid, alright?"

He listened without hearing. The paramedic. The men in suits. The police officers. They were all talking, some of them to him, surely. He wasn't there.

The boy was standing in the doorway to his home. The rain had just begun to fall, the dark clouds smothering any residual light from the setting sun. The walls of the front hallway were smeared with something red. It reeked of the irony smell of blood. A dark, crouched form was silhouetted by the lamplight from the end of the hallway.

"M-Mom? Mom, s-something's wrong with Mr. Hendricks, he's dancing around outside and he's naked and he has blood all over him and I tried to talk to him but he turned around and his eyes were bla-uhhh." The boy's breathless exclamation was cut short when figure rose, back to him, as there was enough light for the boy to make out some details now. It was a woman, wearing a white blouse covered in ribbons of scarlet. Another person was laying down, motionless, behind her, sprawled across the floor. The figure turned around. The boy gasped, not because of the blood covering his mother's face, causing her stringy hair to stick to her cheeks, or the nasty-looking cut across her collarbone, or even the tattered holes all over her clothing. It was her eyes. They were dark voids, as black as the sky, and looking into them, the boy felt his chest tighten. He felt a vicious cold seize his heart, a primal hunger, and he understood at once that what was in front of him was not his mother, at least, not anymore.

Whatever it was, its mouth erupted into a Cheshire-cat grin, it threw back its head, and it laughed. It sounded like a bleating goat, if the goat's throat were made of glass and chalkboard. The boy turned around and ran, but the mom-thing's laugh only followed him out the door. All around the boy, the void-eyed imitations of all the people

he knew were laughing the same awful laugh, as they danced, spun, murdered, devoured. Fires danced from the rooftops of homes, the flickering light cutting through the dark and denying the boy the mercy of ignorance. He heard chanting, though he couldn't make out the words, intertwined with cries of pain and pleasure. Out of the corner of his eye, he caught a glimpse of some dark, huge, inhuman shape lurking in the forest to his right. Left it was.

"-come on, kid! Stay awake! Come on!" He was back. All at once, the bitter cold, the sting of the cuts, the fatigue in his muscles, the sound of gunshots in the distance, it all flooded his senses. He gripped the paramedic's hand and screamed, cried, wailed, into the pitch dark sky above.

Laughter was his response.

2. Chapter 2: Warmth

Hello! This chapter, as opposed to the (attempted) hard suspense/horror scene that was the last chapter, is pretty much straight fluff, so prepare to feel warm and fuzzy. As always, leave those reviews, please, I appreciate all feedback.

Hawkins, Indiana, November 24, 1985

The sound of laughter permeated the Wheeler house.

"Son. Of. A. BITCH," exclaimed Dustin.

The soft blue glow of the screen illuminated the faces of the four kids, all of whom were laughing hysterically, save one. Dustin slammed his fist into the soft bean bag chair upon which Lucas sat.

"That's total bullshit, TOTAL. BULL. SHIT," he angrily shouted, as the screen transitioned to all black, save for two white words in the center: "Game over."

"Those stupid orange balls of shit definitely didn't hit me!"

"Evidently not, oh smart one," said Lucas, with a cheeky grin. "Now hand it over to the real pro, so you can see how it's really done."

It was Dustin's turn to smile. "Gladly." He held out the controller as if to give it to the other boy, but when Lucas reached for, Dustin pulled it back. He gave a mocking grin as he reached past his friend and handed it over to the red-haired girl sitting on a chair to Lucas's left - or at least, he tried to. The short cord of the NES controller kind of tethered the player within a short distance to the TV and the motion of his arm was abruptly stopped as the cord stretched tautly. Lucas scowled and snatched the controller, a response that only served to cause Max, already highly amused by the endless bickering of the two, to burst out laughing for the second time in less than a minute.

"She can beat me at Dig Dug - NOT Super Mario Bros," said Lucas, his voice low and serious.

That comment provoked an immediate response from Dustin and

Will, and they both started arguing with Lucas about how he definitely wasn't better than her because she was better than them and they were better than him and he can't even make it further than stage one-point-whatever.

On the other side of the Wheeler's warm, cluttered basement, Mike and El smiled knowingly at each other. The NES was state-of-the-art, and nobody else even had one yet. Dustin had saved up enough to purchase the console by taking a page out of Lucas's book and doing menial yard work for all of the old people of Hawkins. He then convinced his mother to purchase it with his money while she was visiting some girlfriends up in New York three weeks ago. Dustin had been bringing the console to the Wheeler house regularly since he got it, and every single time, use of the amazing new machine devolved into a shouting argument over whose turn it was or who was better at stomping on pixelated turtles.

Sitting side-by-side, from behind, one could see their curly hair and mistake them for siblings. El was concentratedly writing out a chapter summary for the fourth chapter of *To Kill A Mockingbird*. She had a love-hate relationship with the book - love, because she found Jem amusing and relatable, hate, because the higher level of diction and syntax in these high school English stories was frustrating to read. El wasn't stupid, but she wasn't an eidetic either, and the sheer time she spent isolated from the world left her struggling to catch up with the rest of the gang. It was a testament to her work ethic and sheer force of will that she was going to be able to attend high school at all - she had been spending the better part of the year that had passed since the defeat of the Mind Flayer studying English, math, history, and basic science.

In other words, she'd been bored as shit.

El was grateful, with every ounce of her body, for all the sacrifices Hopper had made for her in order to eventually lead a "normal" life, but she was also 14. She found some academic subjects marginally interesting; good stories captivated her attention, so she wasn't overly annoyed (usually) by English, and some of the better-written history books weren't that bad either. But at the end of the day, she wanted nothing more than to go outside and just be with her friends. It was a painful year. Now it was over. Her life was finally back on - or rather,

finally getting on - the track of normality, and completing her first week of school was definitely a big step that she was proud to have made.

Mike was also writing, but instead of some boring literary analysis for that bitch of a teacher, Mrs. Walkerson, he was pouring his effort into writing some key spiels to deliver during their next D&D campaign. With El being given the green light by Hopper to start heading to his house regularly for Party nights, Mike eagerly awaited the opportunity to get El involved in a campaign. He had a whole story mapped out in his young mind, all eventually leading up to a glorious fight with a beholder in its otherworldly lair. *You don't hear or see anything, but you can feel a dark, looming presence. As you round the corner, you see it - a huge, disgusting-*"

"JANE! YOUR FATHER IS HERE!" came Mrs. Wheeler's voice from atop the stairs. El looked up and immediately began packing up her things. Seeing the hesitance in her eyes, Mike shouted back up:

"SHE'S COMING!" El smiled gratefully. She was far more confident in speaking situations than ever before, and her vocabulary only grew with each passing day. Screaming conversations, however, were still well-outside her comfort zone. El only screamed when she was upset. She hated screaming. She screamed enough for a lifetime in that lab.

Lucas paused the game, and by extension, the argument, and the four kids by the TV came over to hug El goodbye. Mike walked her up the stairs and to the door, where Hopper awaited, dressed in his tan Sheriff's uniform. "Have fun, kid?"

"Yes," El smiled.

"Whaddaya say to Mrs. Wheeler and Mike?"

"Thank you, Mrs. Wheeler, for letting me over. Thanks, Mike. See you at school." She leaned over and hugged him goodbye, planting a quick kiss on his cheek. Mike's face turned sunburn-red, prompting a laugh from Mrs. Wheeler and a chuckle from Hopper.

"S-see you later, El. You're welcome, by the way. Anytime."

"Come on, kid," said Hopper. "It's late, you need to get to bed." With that, they walked out of the house. The moment the door closed behind them, El began peppering Hopper with questions about when she'd be allowed to stay over for a full sleepover, like the others.

"Hmm," came the incredulous response, and El knew she was doomed. "A sleepover? With boys? Let's start with...never. Yeah, that sounds about right to me."

"Why not?"

"Because."

"Because why?"

Hopper groaned. It was gonna be a long drive home.

3. Chapter 3: Paranoid

Hello guys! This took a while to write because dialogue is a real bitch to come up with. The very first chapter was very dark, very horror, and very much entirely separate from established canonical *Stranger Things* lore. The last chapter was very light, very fluff, and very much entirely in line with canonical *Stranger Things* lore. This chapter, and pretty much all other chapters from here on out, are somewhere between these two extremes. OCs and stuff I'm adding in will be present, but so will all the things that make the actual show great. This chapter is about Nancy's mental state following the events of the last two seasons.

Hawkins, Indiana, November 25, 1985

"You will die," pronounced Ms. Carter, with all the histrionic drama she could muster, "if you swallow methanol. So don't get any funny ideas!"

It was intended to be humorous, but it only gathered a bunch of bored, blank stares, from bored, tired seniors. AP Chem was not the kind of class to attract kids that would try and steal methanol from the lab to drink later at a party. Following several seconds of awkward silence, she muttered, with a hearty sigh, "Well go on then. Aprons and goggles. You know the drill."

With that, the class was dismissed to their lab stations. Nancy Wheeler felt, as always, a momentary pang in her heart walking up the bench. In a different life, she'd be partnered with Barb...

But that was the past. With her death avenged and a proper funeral held, Nancy had managed to find her way to acceptance. Barb might be gone, but she sure as hell wouldn't want Nancy to throw away her life wallowing in misery.

"Hey Nancy," came the muttered greeting from Nathan Antonetti.

"Hey, Nathan," she said.

Nancy's lab partner for the semester project was a tall, lean boy, a new student from some suburb in New York. Dressed in blue jeans and a red-and-grey striped pullover, he stood hunched at the workbench, scribbling down something stoichiometric, intensely focused on his work. Between the outfit, his wide, skinny-rimmed glasses, and his... well, his whole overall... *demeanor*, he looked about as stereotypically nerdy as one could be. Like the kind of kid her brother would hang out with.

To ask anybody in Hawkins High's class of 1985 who the overall smartest person in the grade was, was to invite the same exact answer from anybody surveyed: Nancy Wheeler. That was true last year, and the year before that, and the year before that. But Nathan was something else. The kid, as far as anybody knew, did nothing but study. He was extremely popular when it came to group work, because he took it upon himself to do it, and do it the *right* way, but other than that, he was pretty much a self-imposed exile of the school.

"What are you working on?" she asked, trying to make small-talk.

"Redox," he grunted. That puzzled her, but she didn't say anything else immediately, as she had learned that it was hard to get more than a word or two out of him at a time. Redox wasn't, as far as she knew, a topic that involved **that** much math. Her mind started cycling through possibilities; *he could be lying, but why? Is he trying to hide something? Is he making something? Is-*

"Nancy?" Confusion showing on his face, Nathan was looking at her. She realized she must've been staring as she thought. She shook her head.

"I'm sorry, Nathan, just... zoned out, for a sec." *What the hell is wrong with me? Hiding something? He's just doing his work.* The boy looked at her for another second. His gaze was piercing; Nancy felt he was peering right through her and at the projector screen behind them. "No, I'm fine, really. Just a bit tired." He nodded his head slightly and averted his gaze back down to his notes.

The rest of the class passed uneventfully, and with the bell, Nancy reached for the test tube rack to start cleaning up. "It's fine," grunted

Nathan.

"Oh, uh, you're sure?"

"Yes."

She would have protested, but she was still feeling embarrassed about allowing herself to think like that about Nathan, and it was the last class of the day, anyway, so she decided to oblige him and leave. She had scarcely taken three steps outside the class when she walked right into a pair of waiting arms. Jonathan Byers wrapped her in a tight hug, which she reciprocated, and grinned at her. "How was chemistry?"

"Fine," she replied tersely, more so than she intended.

Jonathan's grin faded into a sort of soft frown. "What's the matter?"

Nancy pursed her lips and looked down at her feet. What *was* the matter with her? This wasn't the first time she had caught her mind racing through the potential nefarious acts some random person *could* have been doing in her presence. It wasn't the second or third, either. She sighed heavily, and looked back up at Jonathan, her eyes wide.

"Do you feel like you're being watched?" she asked, her voice low.

A note of panic crept into Jonathan's eyes. "What? Right now?" he replied, his voice also low, his tone deadly serious.

"No, no, not... well, yes, but also, no. I mean... in general. When you pass a stranger on the road or see some kid taking notes, or somebody's parked in a car on the side of the street..." Jonathan's face shifted again, this time into a sad smile. He stared into her eyes for a good few seconds, carefully considering his next few words.

"Nancy, they're gone. Those people, the lab, they're gone. I get it. I get what you're talking about. But they're gone. I don't think we have to worry anymore. The scientists, the monsters, they're gone." Nancy smiled weakly and pulled him back into a hug.

"I *know*, I just... yeah, you're right." She leaned in and kissed him on the cheek, causing him to blush red. She laughed, which felt as good

for her to do as it did for Jonathan to hear. "We've been together for a *year*, and you're still blushing when I kiss you in public?" Jonathan's face erupted into a big stupid grin. God, she loved it when he smiled. It too often felt like so many of those had been robbed from them in the last two years. Before he could say anything, she leaned in and kissed him again, and he kissed back, put his hand on her cheek, pulled her close. If one good thing came out of the past two years... she pulled away and smiled.

"My place or yours?"

4. Chapter 4: Something Else

Hey guys, at this point, I've realized that writing just... well, between school and lacrosse, expect Saturday updates from here on out, I simply can't write any faster. Setting up the story is hard, harder than I thought it'd be. But I'm having fun just playing around with these characters. I do genuinely hope to see Steve back in Hawkins for S3 (fyi this is a Steve chapter).

November 25

Thwack!

"Bullseye! Haha!"

"You gotta be kiddin' Powell," groaned Officer Callahan. "Where the hell did ya learn to throw like that?" Officer Powell only chuckled in response. They were both lounging around in the common room, throwing darts at a spiffy new dartboard affixed to the wall. Callahan's wife had gotten it for him for his birthday, which made it all the funnier to everyone else that he couldn't aim for his life.

"You fools are wasting time and tax dollars," huffed Flo. "Put down the damn darts and do your job," she said, gesturing to a table with several rather tall stacks of manila folders.

Callahan started to protest, so he failed to hear the sounds of the front door opening and heavy boots striking the old tile floor. Jim Hopper walked in, passing by the common room and the argument within.

"It's not like we have anything to do rig-"

"Phil, just read the damn papers," interrupted Hopper, his voice tired. Or at least, he tried to come off as tired. To be truthful, he was feeling rather chipper, but he didn't feel like ruining that mood by giving Callahan any room to continue arguing with Flo, so tired, grumpy, no-room-for-bullshit cop it was. He continued walking past without waiting for a response, and none came, *thank God*. He settled down in his office chair, placed his hat on his desk, and smiled.

She was happy.

Holy hell, she loved going to school, probably more than was healthy for any normal 14-year-old. The way her face lit up when they got in the car always made Hopper chuckle – it was the same look most kids gave when they managed to dupe their parents into pulling them *out* of class.

And picking her up from that Wheeler kid's place... well, the smile in her eyes was all the reassurance he needed to know he made the right choice in letting her finally start leaving the cabin on a regular basis.

"Hopper? Hopper, you got a call." Flo's voice snapped him out of thinking about his newfound joy in life, which was irritating, but the job was the job, he supposed. Before he could acknowledge her, however, she said something that chilled him to the marrow of his bones. "From Mullen."

God dammit. "When did he call?" The Roane County Sheriff didn't take kindly to being kept waiting.

"About 15 minutes ago. Said he needed to speak about something. Sounded urgent."

Hopper groaned and rubbed his forehead in frustration. That wasn't helpful in the slightest. Mullen was the kind of man who believed that, regardless of circumstance, his time was triple the worth of anybody below him in rank, and when he was kept waiting for *any* reason, he damn well made sure that it sounded "urgent." As he went to pick up his phone, however, Flo stopped him. "One other thing. You need to go out and talk with Walter. He called a few minutes ago and he's damn near ready to pull out that hunting rifle of his and start usin' it on those poor fools living across from him. Something about messing with his livestock."

Hopper groaned louder. Dealing with the Sheriff was an annoying part of his job. Dealing with the mess that was the most devout Christian in town living next door to a family of hippies was just a nightmare. Walter Kovacs considered the Mahrez family to be a bunch of Godless heathens spreading debauchery and degeneracy;

they considered the old man to be an ignorant fool and a vociferous racist. Hopper considered the both of them to be colossal pains in his ass.

"Send Callahan," he said, causing Flo to raise her eyebrow. "What? He's a deputy. A fool, maybe, but also a deputy. Send Powell too, then. The two of 'em should be able to resolve whatever it is."

Flo looked less than satisfied with that answer, not that Hopper cared. As she turned to go tell the two other officers, Hopper called over her shoulder, "Hey, have 'em take the kid too!"

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"You're lucky, y'know. Comin' with me. The Maw-rez's ain't bad people, least as far as I know. Every time I've talked with them, they've been downright pleasant, if a bit strange. Gotta expect that from foreigners, though," explained Powell, as he drove the squad car towards the Kovacs farm. "Kovacs is a piece of work. Callahan's gonna have his hands full getting a statement from him."

"Yeah?" came the absent-minded reply. Steve Harrington wasn't particularly interested in watching Powell and Callahan try to talk to some angry farmers. This wasn't what he had in mind when he decided to apply for a police internship – though he didn't have much of an idea of what to expect, anyway. More action, maybe? No, not that – not after spending the last two years of his life fighting otherworldly monsters. But this? This wasn't what he was thinking of when he decided he wanted to become a member of the boys in blue.

Powell turned to look at him. "Hey, you alright, kid?"

Steve turned to face the officer, nodding his answer. Satisfied that everything was indeed alright, Powell turned back to the road. In a few minutes, they arrived at the driveway of the Kovacs farm, Callahan's squad car right behind them. The old man was waiting by his mailbox, one foot on the ground, the other on the top end of the shovel blade that was stuck halfway in the dirt at his feet. In his hands, he held the shovel's handle. He had on faded and dirty overalls, a mud-stained shirt, work boots, a faded blue baseball cap, and a scowl that looked all too natural on his leathery, wrinkled face.

He stood at about Steve's height, with a frame befitting a man that had spent a lifetime working on a farm.

The two officers and their intern got out of their squad cars and approached Kovacs. "I hope you're all here to arrest those dirty heathens for destroying my property!" His voice was surprisingly deep for an older guy, commanding, like a drill sergeant.

"Morning, Walter," replied Callahan, a plastic smile on his face.

The old man scowled harder, which was honestly quite impressive. "I don't know why you're still talking to me. You *should* be arresting them for the crimes they've committed against me, against God!" He pointed a bony, calloused finger at the identical farmhouse sitting at the end of the driveway on the other side of the road.

"Crimes?" asked Callahan, his plastic smile still rigid on his face. "What crimes?"

"Vandalism! Trespassing! Animal Cruelty! I don't know, I ain't a lawyer or a copper, I just know what they did was wrong."

"And what exactly did they do?"

"They've eviscerated my chickens!"

"They *what*?" asked Steve, unable to hide his incredulity at what the old man had just said. Kovacs turned to face him, and Steve felt the man's gaze pierce him like an arrow.

"Did I stutter, boy?" spat Kovacs, his voice venomous. "They tore my chickens up, like some damn rabid animals."

Powell sighed. "You're saying that Omar Mahrez killed your chickens?"

"Not just that. He ripped the damn things apart."

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Kovacs might've been a real ass, but he wasn't delusional or exaggerating. Steve had found five of his birds, or what was left of

them strewn out across the wide field to the side of the old man's farmhouse. He was left to inspect the bird corpses as Callahan and Powell took statements from Kovacs and Omar Mahrez, respectively. They had seen fit to let the intern do the fun work – looking at dead bird carcasses.

The one in front of him was a gruesome sight to behold, even for someone who had been among the veiny, pulsing membranes and tendrils in the mind flayer tunnels. The poor thing was ripped open from its neck to its tail on the side, leaving all of its innards out for the flies to feast on. Its head was torn off. It smelled pretty bad, though not as bad as it was going to get – according to Kovacs, these chickens were alive and kicking less than 12 hours prior. Steve crouched down to get a closer look, dark thoughts going through the back of his head.

He was looking for the radial symmetry of demodog bites.

If those things were back... *What the hell?*

To his relief, Steve found nothing indicating those hell-beasts killed the chicken. To his confusion was what he found instead. It was hard to see with all the blood, feathers, and guts, not to mention the buzzing of flies, but there was something *in* the chicken. It was small and dark gray, a metallic shimmer visible on its surface despite the viscera covering it. Steve looked around, his eyes settling on a stick on the ground. With a disgusted grimace on his face, he poked and prodded at the chicken carcass until he got the stick behind the object. He guided it out onto the grass.

It looked like some sort of... medallion? It was round, about the size of a silver dollar. There were some finer details, but Steve couldn't make them out in all the blood still on the coin. He poked it some more with the stick, flipping it, wiping blood off on the grass.

"Whatcha doin', kid?" called Callahan, causing Steve to jump a little. He looked over his shoulder to see the officer standing back by the farmhouse, Kovacs right beside him. At that moment, something in Steve's gut just went off. He had no clue what was lying on the ground before him, but he just... knew, that he couldn't show it to Callahan, or Kovacs. Maybe it was paranoia, but he needed to show

Hopper first.

Thinking quickly, Steve brushed his hand by his belt to wave at Callahan, knocking his keys off in the process. He bent over to pick them up, bit his lip, grimaced, and also grabbed the little coin. It felt disgustingly warm and wet in his hand. He pocketed it as he rose with his keys clearly visible, and began walking over, thinking up some excuse for playing with a stick.

Behind him, the flies resumed their feast.